

VZCZCXRO1537
OO RUEHCN RUEHGH RUEHVC
DE RUEHBJ #0692/01 0761205
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 171205Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2928
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0255
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 6867
RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR 0246
RUEHSF/AMEMBASSY SOFIA 0795

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 000692

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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KN, KS, TW, AS

SUBJECT: MARCH 17 MFA PRESS BRIEFING: NORTH KOREAN PREMIER VISIT,
DPRK "SATELLITE" LAUNCH, GAO ZHISHENG'S FAMILY, SPRATLY ISLANDS,
ICC/SUDAN, TAIWAN ARMS SALES

11. Key points at the March 17 MFA press briefing:

-- North Korean Premier Kim Yong-il arrived in Beijing today, March 17, for an official visit.

-- China is "concerned" about the situation on the Korean peninsula, which is "complicated with an increasing number of uncertain factors." China has "noted" North Korea's plans to launch a "test satellite" and supports resuming the Six-Party Talks.

-- The spokesperson denied that Gao Zhisheng's family was subjected to persecution, stating that he was "unaware" of PRC demands that the family return to China.

-- Regarding the deployment of a PRC fisheries patrol ship to the Spratly Islands, Qin said, "China has indisputable sovereignty over the islands and its adjacent waters in the South China Sea."

-- China hopes the UN Security Council will consider the "different views" of Arab League and African Union countries opposed to the International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrant for Sudan President Bashir.

-- In response to a question regarding Taiwan's Quadrennial Defense Review and plans to buy F-16s, the spokesperson said, "We hope the United States will abide by the August 17 Communiqué," "stop military sales to Taiwan" and "avoid endangering peace in the Taiwan Strait."

Visit by North Korean Premier Kim Yong-il

12. At the regularly scheduled March 17 MFA press briefing, spokesperson Qin Gang said that China has "noted the announcement by DPRK to test a satellite" and acknowledged that the current situation on the Korean Peninsula is "complicated with an increasing number of uncertain factors." China is "concerned," and because "peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula is in the interest of all parties," the Chinese Government hopes that "relevant parties can settle the issues through dialogue and exercise restraint."

13. Qin said North Korean Premier Kim Yong-il arrived in Beijing today, March 17, for an official visit. Kim will meet President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao and NPC Chairman Wu Bangguo and will attend ceremonies commemorating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and North Korea. Asked whether the resumption of the Six-Party Talks will be discussed with the DPRK premier, Qin replied that "the two sides can discuss any issues of common interest," and that China supports the Six-Party Talks as a "useful mechanism toward normalizing relations." Scheduling actual dates "depends on when conditions are ripe and if all parties are willing," Qin said.

Escape of Gao Zhisheng's Family

14. Asked if China was insisting on the return of Gao Zhisheng's family, Qin said he had not heard of such any such demands. Qin denied that Gao's family had been subjected to persecution by the Chinese Government, asserting that Gao "is a criminal sentenced because he broke Chinese law." Gao's case was being handled in accordance to law, Qin added.

Territorial Claims to Spratly Islands

15. Regarding the deployment of a Chinese fisheries patrol ship to the Spratly Islands, Qin said the vessel was on a "routine fisheries mission." "China has indisputable sovereignty over the islands and its adjacent waters in the South China Sea," he said.

ICC Arrest Warrant for Sudan's Bashir

16. Regarding the ICC-issued arrest warrant for Sudan President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, Qin said that China has been involved in dialogue in the UN Security Council, noting that some countries in the African Union and Arab League hold "different views" on the warrant. The Chinese Government hopes such concerns will be taken into consideration by the UN Security Council to avoid negatively impacting the peace process in Darfur.

Taiwan Arms Sales

17. In response to a question regarding Taiwan's Quadrennial Defense
BEIJING 00000692 002 OF 002

Review and plans to buy F-16s, the spokesperson said China is "always opposed to arms sales to Taiwan." "We hope the United States will abide by the August 17 Communiqué," "stop military sales to Taiwan" and "avoid endangering peace in the Taiwan Strait," Qin stated.

Bombing in Ganzi, Sichuan

18. In response to a question about yesterday's bombing of a government building in the predominantly Tibetan area of Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan Province, Qin said police are conducting an investigation and will take action accordingly.

Pakistan

19. When asked about China's reaction to the political situation in Pakistan, Qin responded that as "a good neighbor," China hopes Pakistan will "maintain stability and economic development," which are essential for peace throughout the region.

El Salvador Elections

110. Asked to comment on the general elections in El Salvador, Qin said the Chinese Government noted how smoothly the elections proceeded and that "China always attaches great importance" to the friendly relationship between the two countries.

Upcoming Visits

111. In response to a question about the possible postponement of a visit to China by Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso, Qin said the PRC and Japan are currently "in discussions" over the matter. The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Bulgaria, Ivaylo Kalfin, will visit China March 21-25. Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs Stephen Smith will visit China March 24-27.

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